

American Government

Description of the Examination

The Subject Examination in American Government covers material that is usually taught in a one-semester introductory course in American government and politics at the college level. The scope and emphasis of the exam reflect what is most commonly taught in introductory American government courses that emphasize the national government. The exam covers topics such as the institutions and policy processes of the federal government, the federal courts and civil liberties, political parties and pressure groups, political beliefs and behavior, and the content and history of the Constitution. The exam is 90 minutes long and includes approximately 100 multiple-choice questions to be answered in two separately timed 45-minute sections.

Knowledge and Skills Required

Questions on the exam require candidates to demonstrate one or more of the following abilities.

- Knowledge of American government and politics (about 55-60 percent of the exam)
- Understanding of typical patterns of political processes and behavior (including the components of the behavioral situation of a political actor), and the principles used to explain or justify various governmental structures and procedures (about 30-35 percent of the exam)
- Analysis and interpretation of simple data that are relevant to American government and politics (10-15 percent of the exam)

The subject matter of the American Government exam is drawn from the following topics.

Approximate Percent of Examination

30-35%	<u>Institutions and policy processes: Presidency, Bureaucracy, and Congress</u>
15-20%	<u>Federal courts, civil liberties, and civil rights</u>
15-20%	<u>Political parties and interest groups</u>
10-15%	<u>Political beliefs and behavior</u>
15-20%	<u>Constitutional underpinnings of American democracy</u>

Approximate Percent of Examination

30-35%	Institutions and policy processes: Presidency, Bureaucracy, and Congress
	The major formal and informal institutional arrangements and powers
	Structure, policy processes, and outputs

Relationships among these three institutions and links between them and political parties, interest groups, the media, and public opinion

15-20%

Federal courts, civil liberties, and civil rights

Structure and processes of the judicial system with emphasis on the role and influence of the Supreme Court

The development of civil rights and civil liberties by judicial interpretation

First Amendment freedoms

The rights of the accused

Equal protection and due process

15-20%

Political parties and interest groups

Political parties (including their function, organization, historical development, and effects on the political process)

Interest groups (including the variety of activities they typically undertake and their effects on the political process)

Elections (including the electoral process)

10-15%

Political beliefs and behavior

Processes by which citizens learn about politics

Political participation (including voting behavior)

Public opinion

Beliefs that citizens hold about their government and its leaders

Political culture (the variety of factors that predispose citizens to differ from one another in terms of their political perceptions, values, attitudes, and activities)

The relationships between the general public and its political leaders

15-20%

Constitutional underpinnings of American democracy

The development of concepts such as:

- Federalism (with attention to intergovernmental relations)
- Separation of powers
- Majority rule
- Minority rights

Considerations that influenced the formulation and adoption of the Constitution

Study Resources

To prepare for the American Government exam, you should read several introductory textbooks used in college courses on this subject. Visit your local college bookstore to determine which textbooks are used by the college for American Government courses. You would do well to consult several textbooks because they vary in content, approach, and emphasis. When selecting a textbook, check the table of contents against the "Knowledge and Skills Required" section. The Internet is another resource you should explore. Additional reading will enrich your understanding of American politics.